

Politics Among Nations; The Struggle for Power and Peace

Hans J. Morgenthau

1. Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.

a. One such fact is that human nature, in which the laws of politics have their roots, has not changed since ancient times. Human nature is fixed and must be acknowledged for what it is.

2. The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concepts of interest defined in terms of power.

a. We assume that statesman think and act in terms of interest defined as power, and the evidence of history bears that assumption out. That assumption allows us to retrace and anticipate the steps a statesman has taken or will take on the political scene.

3. **Realism assumes that its key concept of interest defined as power is an objective category which is universally valid, but it does not endow that concept with a meaning that is fixed once and for all.**
 - a. **The idea of interest is the essence of politics and is unaffected by the circumstances of time and place.**
 - b. **The kind of interest determining political action in a particular period of history depends upon the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated.**

- 4. Political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action. But it is also aware of the tension between the moral command and the requirements of successful political action.**
 - a. Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place.**
 - b. Realism considers prudence – the weighing of the consequences of alternative political actions – to be the supreme virtue in politics.**

5. Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe.

a. All nations are tempted, and few have been able to resist the temptation for long, to clothe their own particular aspirations and actions in the moral purposes of the universe.

6. The political realist maintains the autonomy of the political sphere, as the economist, the lawyer, and the moralist maintain theirs.

a. The political realist is not unaware of the existence and relevance of standards of thought other than political ones. However, as a political realist, he cannot but subordinate these other standards to those of politics.

Four Fundamental Rules

1. **Diplomacy must be divested of the crusading spirit.**
2. **The objectives of foreign policy must be defined in terms of the national interest and must be supported with adequate power.**
3. **Diplomacy must look at the political scene from the point of view of other nations.**
4. **Nations must be willing to compromise on all issues that are not vital to them.**

Five Prerequisites of Compromise

1. Give up the shadow of worthless rights for the substance of real advantage.
2. Never put yourself in a position from which you cannot retreat without losing face and from which you cannot advance without great risk.
3. Never allow a weak ally to make decisions for you.
4. The armed forces are the instrument of foreign policy, not its master.
5. The government is the leader of public opinion, not its slave.